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**Our.....
Little...
Roman**

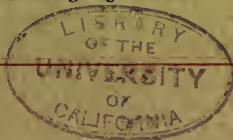
Verses of Childhood

BY
FRANCES MARGARET MILNE

Author of
"For To-day," "Heliotrope," Etc.



"Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now."



Our Little Roman



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Gift of author

Mrs. R. McKibben
San Luis Obispo
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TO
JAMES MILNE BARRY
OUR LITTLE ROMAN

CONTENTS.

Fourteen Years	- - - - -	5
Our Little Roman	- - - - -	6
"But Then"	- - - - -	9
Christmas Gifts	- - - - -	12
April's Darling	- - - - -	16
"Glorious Summer"	- - - - -	19
A Country Ditty	- - - - -	21
Morning Glories	- - - - -	23
One Year Old	- - - - -	26
A Spring Flower	- - - - -	28



FOURTEEN YEARS.

Spirit brave as Bayard knew,
Gentle heart as Sidney true,
In those glowing eyes revealed,
Promise of thy boyhood sealed,
For thy manhood's high endeavor—
Faith and hope to fail thee never!

On the borderland of youth—
Eager for the fray, in sooth!
Yet a moment pause to cast
One fond glance on childhood past;
Sweet remembrance, Darling! given
To the love on earth—in heaven.

Ah, Our Little Roman's sway
Hath not passed with childhood's day.
Still our hearts the empire own
Of the smile, the look, the tone;
Linking with that bright beginning
All the years shall give for winning.

Aunt Frances.

March 29, 1902.

OUR LITTLE ROMAN.

I see him in his scarlet cloak,
Our darling, beautiful patrician!
Sure never Roman prouder wore
The toga of his young ambition.
And never Roman looked or spoke
With more imperial, instant sway,
That when—one dimpled arm outstretched—
He gave the mandate firm: “Go ’way!”

But oh, the soft, the melting tone,
When spent the storm of baby ire,
And, all transfigured in their tears,
Those flashing orbs forgot their fire!
“*My* mamma!” Ne’er the culprit fay
Confession more bewitching made!
Nor absolution quicklier won
For every precept disobeyed.

And "G'anma! make!" Who could resist
That irresistible petition?
That comradeship of innocence
To which all else must yield submission?
Aye, "Ope de doo'!" and let him in —
"G'anma" will not her pet deny:
Oh, "Roguey-poguey!" what a game
To make the breathless moments fly!

"Goo'-night," sweet pet! The day is done—
The all too short and busy day!
And all that bright activity
Must Nature's gracious call obey.
Up reach fair arms and rose-bud mouth
For good-night kiss to each and all,
And, "Mamma, wock!" is now, at last,
His sweet, beseeching, drowsy call.

Oh, baby dear! we may not watch
Thy infant loveliness again.
Far, far on boyhood's road thy steps
Will urge their way to paths of men.
But be it late, or be it soon—
Whatever day our tryst befall—
“Goo'-bye!” my darling! in the care
Of God, who careth for us all.

“BUT THEN!”

I wonder did you ever hear
That sweetest little story,
Of darling little Sunshine bright,
Our lovely morning-glory?

Our April blossom, blooming fair
In face of wind and shower;
And welcoming, with glad delight,
Each golden sunlit hour.

But out of every gentle phrase
That Love devised for naming,
The quaintest, sure, she found herself
That one could think of claiming.

“How dark the sky! how dull the day!
The rain how ceaseless falling!”
“*But then,*” our darling made reply,
“How all the birds are calling!”

“ Alas, this frost has killed, I fear,
The tender fruit buds swelling.”
“ *But then*, oh, come!” her sweet voice cried,
I’ve found the snowdrop’s dwelling.”

“ How poor and mean this narrow room,
How pent for stormy weather.”
“ *But then*, oh, auntie dear, you know,
It keeps us all together.”

“ Poor child! Your frock so badly worn,
You could not go a-Maying;
I grieve to see you still at home,
When all your mates are playing.”

“ *But then*, mamma”—a sudden smile
Dispelled the passing shadow—
“ We’ll have our Maying, Rob and I,
Down yonder in the meadow.”

And so that little phrase became
A household word and treasure;
A sweet rebuke to useless care—
A sweet recall to pleasure.

Ah, time may try, and rudely thwart,
Her spirit's brave endeavor.
But then, we know our darling true
Will keep her trust forever.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

Come, my little Edith,
Climb upon my knee;
Tell me all the wonders
Christmas brings to thee.

Gift of toy and sweetmeat,
Picture book, and all;
And the treasure dearest,
Curly-headed doll.

Shall I tell you something,
Five short years ago,
Came to bless sweet Christmas?—
Whisper, soft and low.

'Twas a little fairy,
Lovelier far to see
Than the loveliest dolly
That could ever be.

Not a word she uttered,
Yet we loved her well;
Welcoming her gladly
In our hearts to dwell.

If you had but seen her
Open wide her eyes!
If you had but heard her
Cooing little cries!

For her eyes were clearer
Than the dewdrop's shine;
Full of wondrous questions
We could not divine.

And she had a language
Like the song of birds;
Sweeter far, and dearer,
Than our sweetest words.



Dear mamma would fold her
 To her bosom warm,
Fragile little blossom,
 Safe from every storm.

Dear papa would hasten
 Home, at close of day,
For a kiss and frolic
 With his darling fay.

Riding on his shoulder,
 Dancing on his knee,—
Merrier little fairy
 You could never see!

So she grew in beauty,
 Every day more dear;
Heaven grant her to us
 Many a happy year!

You have never seen her?

Will I tell her name?

Why, my little Edith,

Yours is just the same!

APRIL'S DARLING.

She strayed one April morning
 Into this world of care;
Her eyes were violets dewy,
 A sunbeam was her hair;
For April's sun and shower
 Should be of earth her share.

The flowers were her heralds,
 (For beauty was her thrall!)
Their starry blossoms opened
 For her fairy coronal;
And the glad air thrilled with welcome,
 As the birds began to call.

Oh, she was the brightest blossom
 That ever bloomed on earth!
To what tide of love and rapture
 Had her coming given birth.
How she filled the olden homestead
 With the tender olden mirth.

Yet their darling was no angel,
 Circled by celestial rays.
No, the baby words she uttered,
 And the loving baby ways,
Told their hearts of something dearer
 They should have in after days.

Oh, the shining bow of promise
 Of the future's sky was rife
With a love all sweet and human
 That should crown and bless their life;
That should be home's dearest guerdon
 In the bleak world's moil and strife.

So the happy, happy spring-times
 Had vanished, one by one,
When, one radiant April morning,
 As they hailed the rising sun,
Hailed they, too, a tender sorrow—
 For the baby dear was gone.

Yet she had not left them grieving.

No, she lingered by their side,
Dearer, lovelier far than ever,
In her girlhood's opening pride—
For the April bud had blossomed
To the rose of summer-tide.

“There is gain for every losing,”
Saith the poet. Yet, alack!
In their eyes the tears will gather
As they trace the early track,
For the winsome little baby
Who can never more come back.

“GLORIOUS SUMMER.”

Oh, the days will soon be long, my pet!

The days will soon be long;

And the woods that are glooming now, and wet,

Will be gay with color and song.

We will gather the briary-rose, my sweet!

And the larkspur's purple bloom;

And the daisy will blossom under your feet,

And the violet waft perfume.

Oh, the long, bright, beautiful days, my pet!

Will pass like a happy dream.

We know where the loveliest nooks are set

By the banks of our rushing stream;

And your fairy canoe shall float, my sweet!

On that rapid and crystal tide,

And come to its anchor from voyage fleet,

As we watch for it, side by side.

We know where the cunningest nests, my pet!
Are hid in the maple bough.

Oh, be sure that the robins will not forget
The tryst they have kept till now!
And nobody else can guess, my sweet!

(Though they sing it so loud and clear!)
The wonderful secret the birds repeat
To a little child's listening ear.

Then what if the clouds be dark, my pet?
And what if the storm-wind rave?
The glorious summer is coming yet
To glorify land and wave.

And under the orchard boughs, my sweet!
And out in the woodland free,
No happier comrades shall summer meet
In all the land than we.

A COUNTRY DITTY.

Did you ever go a-milking,

Little maid?

When the summer morning dew-drop

Diamonds laid

On each leaf, and birds were singing

Thro' the glade?

Did you ever go a-milking,

Little maid?

When the shadows softly lengthened

Thro' the glade,

And the whispering wind of evening

Round you played?

Tinkle! tinkle! Oh, how brightly,

In the pail,

Pours the rich and creamy treasure,

Without fail,

“Bossy” gives us! What a fragrance

Does exhale!

Balm of clover-blossomed meadow,
Grasses sweet;
Draught of crystal, where the bending
Willows meet,
And the brook, from shady covert,
Laughs at heat!

All day long, from copse and upland—
Sun and dew,
Nature's alchemist, our "Bossy,"
Mixed and drew
This rich drink of health and pleasure,
Dear, for you.

Say good-by, for milking's over,
Little maid;
See how mildly "Bossy" gazes—
Have we said
"Thanks"? Nay; then with juicy fodder,
Debt is paid.

MORNING GLORIES.

Lift up to mine your angel eyes—
Those radiant eyes of blue!
Ah, pure the faith there mirrored lies;
The world is fresh to you.

A father's smile, a mother's kiss,
A sister's loving words;
No harsher symphony than this
Has stirred your young heart's chords.

Your cheek was never wet with tears—
Vain tears of wild regret;
The morning-glories of your years
Glow freshly round you yet.

A bird that tries its fluttering wing
In joy of farther flight,
A beautiful and precious thing,
You bless affection's sight.

Ah, fain would we your buoyant grace
Might linger here awhile;
Earth is a fairer, happier place
When lightened by your smile.

My sweet! these locks of finest gold
Will silver o'er with care;
And sorrow mark, with many a fold,
This thoughtful forehead fair.

Yet not from woes must needs befall,
I pray you may be free;
The lot that comes to each, to all,
I know for you shall be.

But from "the crowd of meaner things,"
The sin, the doubt, the fear;
"Love cannot spread his shining wings"
In that dark atmosphere.

Let others wish thee earthly meed
Of wealth, or fame, or power,
The high emprise of valor's deed,
The grace of beauty's dower.

I can but wish my darling still
In spirit undefiled—
In heart which love shall ever fill,
The bliss of little child.

ONE YEAR OLD.

'There is milestone number one,
Baby darling! bravely won.
Little feet, all rosy-white,
Ready for the journey bright;
Not a stain and not a scar
Doth their dimpled beauty mar.

Mine are weary oft, and sore,
As they toil the pathway o'er;
Hindered oft, and often strayed,
From the goal they should have made.
Far remote the portals shine
Of my morning, baby mine!

O, my baby! in thine eyes
Shines the soul of high emprise.
Arduous the pathway, dear,
Stretching on from year to year.

Yet these tiny feet may climb
Upwards still, to heights sublime.

But a truce to musings deep;
Love and joy thy birthday keep.
Little monarch! who would be
Rebel to thy royalty?
And among thy subjects leal,
Let me, too, in homage kneel.

A SPRING FLOWER.

Sweet and clear the song should ring,
Darling! that would welcome thee.
Sweeter far than I can sing—
Yet let this an offering be.

Flower of love's own perfect spring,
Beautiful beyond compare;
All the hopes that round thee cling
Pure and bright as blossoms fair.

At the shining of thy eyes
Hope lifts up her radiant gaze,
Grief forgets her patient sighs,
Faith remembers prayer and praise.

Thro' the vista of the years,
Love would fain thy pathway trace;
Tender longing, tender fears,
O'er her soul like shadows chase.

Spring-time fair shall melt away
 Into summer's fuller bloom ;
And thy childhood's lovelier day
 Yield to youth its sweet perfume.

Summer's wealth of flower and fruit,
 Autumn's garners overflow ;
And thy manhood's grave pursuit,
 Richer guerdon shall bestow.

Child of hope and promise dear ;
 Love's own heart may not foretell
All the rapture, even here,
 That shall yet thy bosom swell.

We have seen the dawning light
 Streaming over earth and sky ;
But the noon's effulgence bright
 May not bless our mortal eye.

“ Peace on earth, good will to men ! ”

Faint for us the echoes ring ;
But for you shall once again,
Loud and clear, the angels sing !

Thro' thy eyes, sweet baby mine,
We behold the vision far ;
Over innocence divine
Still forever shines the star.



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